

England Laws 4
Statutes - VII
[21 Jan 1680]



Anno vicesimo primo Jacobi Regis, &c.

An Act to prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children.



WHEREAS many Lewd Women that have been delivered of Bastard Children, to avoid their shame and to escape punishment, do secretly bury or conceal the Death of their Children, and after, if the Child be found dead, the said Women do alledge that the said Child was born dead, whereas it falleth out some times (although hardly it is to be proved,) that the said Child or Children were Murthered by the said Women their lewd Mothers, or by their assent or procurement.

For the preventing therefore of this great mischief, Be it Enacted by the Authority of this present Parliament, that if any Women after one month next ensuing the end of this next Session of Parliament, be delivered of any Issue of her body, Male or Female, which being born alive, should by the Laws of this Realm be a Bastard, and that she endeavour privately either by drowning or secret burying thereof, or any other way, either by herself or the procuring of others, so to conceal the death thereof, as that it may not come to light, whether it were born alive or not, but be concealed, In every such case, the said Mother so offending shall suffer Death, as in case of murder, except such Mother can make proof by one Witness at the least, that the Child (whose death by her so intended to be concealed,) was born dead.

Ad deliberation' Gaol' Domini Regis de Newgate tenet' pro Civitat' London apud Justice-Hall in le Old-Bailey London, in parochia Sancti Sepulchri in Ward' de Faringdon extra London pred' die Veneris scil' Decimo die Septembris, Anno Regis Caroli Secundi nunc Angl' &c. Tricesimo secundo Coram Roberto Clayton milit' Majore Civitat' London, Willielmo Dolben uno Justic' dicti Domini Regis ad placita Coram ipso Rege apud Westm' tenend' assign' Ric. Weston milit' uno Baron' Scacc' dicti Domini Regis, Thome Turner milit' Barone Willielmo Turner milit' Robt' H. milit' Cl. milit' man milit' Aldermanis Civitat' pred', Georgio Jeffreys milit' uno Servien Domini Regis ad Legem Justic' de Cestr' ac Recordator ejusdem Civitat' ac aliis Sociis suis Justic' dicti Domini Regis ad Gaolam suam de Newgate de Prison in ea existend' Deliberand' assign'

HIS Majesties Justices here present, taking notice of the frequency of Murthering of Bastard Children, by their Lewd Mothers; for the better preventing thereof, do think fit, agree and order, that the Statute abobe mentioned be Printed at the charge of this City, and be sent to the Ministers of the severall Parish Churches within this City and the Liberties thereof; who are desired to cause the same to be openly Read in their Churches, four times in a Year, after Morning-Prayer, for the purpose aforesaid.

VVagstaffe.